

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 386

RC 011 582

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TITLE Factors Related to Community Residents' Evaluation of Local Services.
INSTITUTION East Texas State Univ., Commerce.
PUB DATE 22 Aug 79
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society (Burlington, Vermont, August 24-26, 1979)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Attitudes; Community Programs; *Community Satisfaction; *Community Services; Human Services; *Quality of Life; *Rural Areas; Rural Development; Social Responsibility; *Social Services; Social Welfare; Welfare Services
IDENTIFIERS *Texas (Hopkins County)

ABSTRACT

The extent to which citizens are knowledgeable about and satisfied with major services in their communities is important in effective community development. Quantities as well as quality of services need to be assessed to make a meaningful evaluation of quality of life. To investigate selected institutional services in Hopkins County, Texas, in terms of their availability and residents' satisfaction with each, 113 randomly selected residents of 5 small, rural communities in the county were interviewed. Residents were questioned about where they secured goods and services; how they ranked the availability in their community of agricultural, industrial, recreational or business opportunities, employment, schooling, police and fire protection, etc.; their awareness of social services such as Red Cross, family planning, and senior citizen center; their participation in community organizations and activities; their perception of community attitudes, problems, needs, leaders, and desired changes; and demographic data. Results showed a large number of residents used routine services in the county seat as well as in their local community and occasional services in communities outside the county. Those who were long time residents, larger sized households, females, older, lower in level of education, low in level of community participation, urban dwellers, non-white, and had negative attitudes toward the community had greater dissatisfaction with community services. (NEC)

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FACTORS RELATED TO COMMUNITY RESIDENTS'
EVALUATION OF LOCAL SERVICES*

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The extent to which citizens are knowledgeable about and satisfied with major services in their community is important to securing effective community development. It often is contended by resource administrators that the average person is uninformed, or misinformed, on most resource issues, and that greater citizen support for proposed agency programs would be forthcoming "if only the facts were better known".

Community services constitute major dimensions of the quality of life and social well-being in an area. The quantities as well as quality of these services need to be assessed in order to make a meaningful evaluation of the state of quality of life and social well-being in a given community. The present paper attempts to identify major

*Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Burlington, Vermont, August 1979. The paper uses data collected under a project entitled, "Quality of Life and Social Well Being in an East Texas Community." Research under that project was conducted during 1977-78 and was directed by the junior author of this paper. The funds were made available by the Organized Research Office, East Texas State University, Commerce.

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sociological variables related to community residents' satisfaction for local services. Identification of such variables is expected to shed light on the nature and quality of life services in a given community.

Quality of Life and Social Well-Being

Attempts to define the concept of "quality of life" have often resulted in confusions and contradictions. While various sources including Environmental Protection Agency have identified all kinds of indicators of "quality of life", its definitions are largely contingent "upon such factors as social class, residents' distance from government agencies, and the degree to which people embrace certain aspects of the counterculture". (Burdge, 1973) Additionally, most quality of life definitions seem to have ignored specific criteria such as community services. (see Bloomberg and Schamandt, 1969; Greenfield, 1973; and Knuse, 1976)

Social well-being appears to be a more inclusive term than is quality of life. According to Wilkinson (1973), the concept of social well-being must be distinguished from and related conceptually to a concept of individual well-being on one hand, and one of ecological well-being on the other. These are variant levels of analysis of a singular reality and thus must be conceptualized in ways which are, at least in the most general or abstract sense, consistent with one another.

Singh and Wilkinson (1974) suggest some general parameters of a sociological model of social well-being which might be used to organize research in community field. These include:

1. Economic development. This, of course, is what is indicated by the cost-benefit ratio. From the sociological perspective attention needs to be given to identifying the point beyond which economic growth becomes a negative rather than a supportive influence upon the attainment of other social goals. A simple cost-benefit criterion projected into the future is grossly-orientation to a balance-orientation (see Meadows, et al., 1972; and Odum, 1970) in development policy.
2. Provisions of services and amenities. The technical quality of services and the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery systems need to be considered. These are not mere artifacts of the process of economic growth. Gross discrepancies in service availability and adequacy can be found within regions with similar demographic and economic characteristics. The critical question is to what extent will a proposed public project contribute to an improvement in this area?
3. Human welfare. Development of facilities and service and even massive episodes of economic growth often have the effect of increasing rather than decreasing the gap between upper and lower classes. Service organizations may be created but their clients may consist only of an elite. The distribution of the benefits of a development project needs to be carefully monitored, along with actual changes in the health and well-being of people at all levels of impact.
4. Collective viability. To what extent does the completion of a public project increase or decrease the ability of the people who are affected, e.g. in a local community, to organize and solve their common problems in the future? This has been shown, in a number of studies (see Singh and Wilkinson, 1968) to be a particularly serious problem in programs where many technical and economic decisions must be made by experts in organizations outside the local community.

Community Services

The quality of life at the community level basically includes services and amenities that are developed to meet sustenance and other needs of citizens. Warren (1975) refers to these as "locality relevant functions", namely: (1) production - distribution - consumption, (2) socialization, (3) social control, (4) social participation, and (5) mutual support.

Dempsey (1975) in a rural community study, focused on the relationship between the community as a social system and aspects of the individual personality system. That study looked at the relationship of mental health to the perceived levels of satisfaction of locality relevant functions. The data generally supported that a positive relationship existed between perception of adequacy of performance of community social functions and the psychological well-being of the individual. In this as well as other studies cited, it is apparent that the quality of life may, to some extent, be measured with predictive value.

The effectiveness of community services may be assessed in terms of objective as well as subjective criteria. Objective criteria (see Wilkening, 1973) include such things as economic base of services in terms of cost-benefit ratios, while subjective criteria (see Singh, 1975) are based upon phenomenological experience of community members in terms of their perceived satisfaction and derived benefits from services provided. The latter was used in this study as the major method of assessing quality of community services in an east Texas community.

Methodology

Hopkins county was selected for study. Sulphur Springs is the county seat of Hopkins county, located about 80 miles north-east of Dallas and about 100 miles southwest of Texarkana. Data were collected from Sulphur Springs and four small rural communities in the county selected randomly for the study.

The study used survey design for data collection and analysis. Data were collected in two phases. The first phase consisted of data

collected from secondary sources such as census reports, selected reports from the Chamber of Commerce and other agencies located in the county. The second phase consisted of data collected through interviews of randomly selected respondents in the five communities. A questionnaire, given in Appendix 'A' of this paper, consisting of three topical areas was employed for the purpose. The topical areas used were: (1) items on use of and satisfaction for community services, (2) items on community participation and orientation, and (3) items on socioeconomic characteristics of respondents.

Each respondent in the five communities was personally interviewed by the principal investigator and several research assistants. In all 113 respondents were interviewed. The loss of sample was eight percent. The sampling procedure consisted of a modified version of area sampling. Data were later subjected to hand tabulation and computer analyses. It took about one year for the whole study to be completed.

Satisfaction for
Community Services

Items from a scale used earlier by Wilkening, 1973, and Singh (1975) were employed to assess the extent to which the residents use business facilities in Hopkins county (mainly Sulphur Springs). The data given in Table 1 show that a large number of residents in Hopkins county used certain routine services in Sulphur Springs. These included such services as groceries, gasoline, etc. A large number of residents, on the other hand, used occasional services in outside communities such as Paris, Greenville, and Dallas. The data given in Table 1 also show that a large number of residents in Hopkins county were dissatisfied with the quality of services in Hopkins county.

Table 1. The Extent to Which Respondents Used and Were Satisfied With the Community Services in Hopkins County.

Item	Percent (N=113)
<u>A. Number and Percent (of the total using a service) of Respondents Who Shopped for Selected Goods and Services Only in Hopkins County During Past 90 Days</u>	
Auto Repairs	70.3
Banking	80.5
Barber; Beauty Shop	73.2
Coin Laundries	38.1
Drugs	78.3
Gasoline	69.2
Groceries	71.5
Hardware	76.7
Newspapers	83.5
Restaurant	49.9
<u>Number and Percent (of the total using a service) of Respondents Who Shopped for Selected Goods and Services Only in Hopkins County During Past 6-12 Months</u>	
Appliances	33.3
Car Purchase	60.0
Clothes (dress)	32.0
Clothes (work)	21.0
Credit or Loan	80.5
Dentist	31.8

Table 1. (continued)

Doctor	71.2
Electrician	79.9

Items	Percent (N=113)
Furniture	51.3
Hospital	71.5
Auto Insurance	90.0
Fire Insurance	95.0
Life Insurance	75.5
Lawyer	68.5
Plumber	91.0
Radio-TV	71.5

B. Respondents' Levels of Satisfaction
of Services in Hopkins County

Agricultural Opportunity

Poor	30.0
Fair	41.5
Excellent	25.0
No Response	3.5

Industrial Opportunity

Poor	50.6
Fair	21.3
Excellent	18.4
No Response	9.7

Table 1 (continued)

Business Opportunity

Poor	51.8
Fair	32.6
Excellent	4.8
No Response	10.8

Item	Percent (N=113)
<u>Police Protection</u>	
Poor	21.6
Fair	32.2
Excellent	39.6
No Response	6.6
<u>Fire Protection</u>	
Poor	25.1
Fair	48.4
Excellent	24.5
No Response	2.0
<u>Sewers</u>	
Poor	30.5
Fair	55.7
Excellent	12.8
No Response	1.0
<u>Garbage Pickup</u>	
Poor	31.4
Fair	29.4
Excellent	39.2

Table 1. (continued)

No Response	0.0
<u>Bus Service</u>	
Poor	46.3
Fair	24.6
Excellent	15.8
No Response	13.3

Items	Percent (N=113)
<u>Informal Visiting, Parties and Get Togethers</u>	
Poor	32.0
Fair	34.8
Excellent	30.5
No Response	2.7
<u>Opportunities to Make Friends</u>	
Poor	22.2
Fair	18.4
Excellent	56.0
No Response	3.4
<u>Contact with Federal Agencies</u>	
Poor	33.0
Fair	24.9
Excellent	21.6
No Response	20.5

An attempt was also made to explain partially why residents of Hopkins county differed in their levels of satisfaction with community services. The scale given on pages 2 and 3 of the questionnaire (see Appendix 'A') was used for the measurement of the dependent variable, satisfaction with community services. Thirteen independent variables were selected for the purpose of explaining the differential level of satisfaction among residents. These were (1) years of residence in the present community, (2) number in household, (3) sex, (4) race, (5) age, (6) marital status, (7) years of schooling, (8) occupational prestige, (9) annual family income, (10) proportion of Hopkins county services used by each resident (as compared to the total number of services used), (11) level of community participation, (12) residents' location of household, and (13) attitude toward community (in terms of five-item scale adopted from Singh, 1975).

Data in Table 2 show the following trends in relationships between dependent and independent variables.

Years in Community

Persons who had spent greater number of years in Hopkins county were more likely to be dissatisfied with community services as compared to those who were relatively new as county residents. Residents who had moved to the county more recently appeared to have a higher degree of satisfaction level for the services available.

Number in Household.

The data show that respondents who had a larger size household were more likely to be dissatisfied with community services as compared

Table 2. Relationship Between Respondents' Levels of Satisfaction with C
Community Services and Selected Independent Variables

Selected Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: <u>Levels of Satisfaction with Services</u>			
	High (N=32)	Med. (N=32)	Low (N=49)	Total (N=113)
<u>Years in Community</u>				
63 +	5	12	23	40
36 - 62	9	17	7	33
Less than 35	18	3	19	40
<u>Number in Household</u>				
3 or more	4	12	19	35
1 - 2	28	20	30	78
<u>Sex</u>				
Male	30	22	39	91
Female	2	10	10	22
<u>Race</u>				
White	24	20	35	79
Non-white	8	12	14	34
<u>Age in Years</u>				
65+	5	7	7	19
35 - 64	8	10	15	33
Below 34	19	15	27	61
<u>Marital Status</u>				
Married	18	19	44	81
Single	14	13	5	32

Table 2. (continued)

Selected Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: <u>Levels of Satisfaction with Services</u>			Total (N=113)
	High (N=32)	Med. (N=32)	Low (N=49)	
<u>College Schooling</u>				
College or more	20	18	21	59
High School or less	12	14	28	54
<u>Level of Community Participation</u>				
High	26	18	16	60
Low	6	14	33	53
<u>Location of Community</u>				
Sulphur Springs	10	15	42	67
Rural Communities	22	17	7	46
<u>Attitude Toward Community</u>				
Favorable	20	22	19	63
Unfavorable	12	10	30	50

to those who had a smaller size household. It appears that persons with larger families developed frustrations with community services apparently of 1) perceived need for better quality schools, 2) perceived need for better housing, 3) perceived need for positive change in several other aspects of the community such as stronger law enforcement and improved physical facilities of the community.

Sex. Males had a higher degree of satisfaction with community services than females. The number of females in our sample was quite small. But only two out of 22 female respondents manifested a higher degree of satisfaction. It appears that the female population in the county was greatly concerned about improving community services.

Race. Non-white in Hopkins county expressed a far lower satisfaction level with community services than did whites. The data are quite consistent with other community studies that indicate higher degrees of dissatisfaction among blacks for their communities. Additionally, this phenomenon may be better understood by the facts of living conditions which show, for example, that plumbing was seriously sub-standard for the negro population in Sulphur Springs than for the total population in Hopkins County.

Age and Marriage. Possibly contrary to popular belief, the younger respondents (below age 34 years) were more satisfied with community services than were those ages 35 and above. Also, single persons tended to have a higher degree of satisfaction than did the respondents who were married. This seems counter to most community studies.

Education. The data indicated that persons with higher education tended

to have higher levels of satisfaction than did those with a high school diploma or less.

Participation. One of the strongest differentials in levels of satisfaction with community services found were between those with high levels of participation in the community and those who had little participation. The higher the participation in community activities the stronger the levels of satisfaction tended to be manifest.

Location of Community. When responses of those living in the rural communities were compared to those of urban Sulphur Springs, it was quite apparent that the rural dwellers had a much higher degree of satisfaction with available services.

Attitude Toward Community. If a generally favorable attitude was held toward the community in which one lived a higher level of satisfaction with available services was manifest than was true for those who had an unfavorable attitude toward the community in which they lived. This bares out findings of other community studies as well as the cliché that "a busy and involved person is a satisfied person."

Concluding Comments

The present study attempted to investigate selected institutional services in Hopkins county in terms of their availability and residents' satisfaction with each.

A large number of residents in Hopkins county used many routine services in Sulphur Springs as well as in their local community. A large number of residents, however, used occasional services in outside communities such as Paris, Greenville, and Dallas. A large number of

residents in Hopkins county were dissatisfied with the quality of services in the County.

It was found in the present study that those who were long time residents in the county, larger sized household, females, older, lower in level of education, low in level of community participation, urban dwellers, and had negative attitudes toward the community had in fact greater dissatisfaction with the community services. Also, the non-white respondents in the county expressed a far lower level of satisfaction for services than did the whites.

The implications for future development in Hopkins county clearly indicate that an upgrading in quality of community programs and services would enhance living satisfactions of the residents. Also, it is apparent that satisfaction would be enhanced by physically combining of public welfare and health services in the county. An over-all upgrading of education level, reduction of family size and increased participation in community organizations by more people might tend to bring about higher levels of satisfaction. These three variables are specifically pointed out in this context because they are factors over which the people have a degree of influence.

The major methodological finding is the further demonstration of the usefulness of the subjective indicator of community organizational effectiveness. Hopkins County residents' perceived satisfaction for community programs and services provided further insight (relative to existing literature) into program and service functioning.

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APPENDIX 'A'

Interview Schedule for Community Studyin Hopkins County, TexasSection I. COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. Now we would like to get some information concerning your feelings about shopping and purchasing. I will read off a list of things; please tell me where you and your family have gone for these goods and services in the past 90 days (three months).

<u>Services</u>	<u>Your Community</u>	<u>Other City or Town (Specify)</u>	<u>Reason for Shopping There</u>
<u>Auto Repairs</u>			
<u>Banking</u>			
<u>Barber, Beauty Shops</u>			
<u>Coin Laundries</u>			
<u>Drugs</u>			
<u>Gasoline</u>			
<u>Groceries</u>			
<u>Hardware</u>			
<u>Newspaper</u>			
<u>Restaurant</u>			

2. Where has your family generally gone in the past 6-12 months for the following goods and services?

<u>Appliances</u>	
<u>Car purchase</u>	
<u>Clothes-Dress Work</u>	
<u>Credit or loan</u>	

	Your Community	Other City or Town (Specify)	Reasons for Shopping There
Dentist			
Doctor			
Electrician			
Furniture			
Heating (oil)			
Hospital			
Insurance-Auto			
Fire			
Life			
Lawyer			
Plumber			
Radio-TV			

3. How would you rank the availability of the following in your community in terms of poor, fair, or excellent.

	Poor	Fair	Excellent
1. Agricultural opportunities	___	___	___
2. Industrial opportunities	___	___	___
3. Business opportunities	___	___	___
4. Recreational opportunities	___	___	___
5. Employment	___	___	___
6. Schooling for children	___	___	___
7. Motels or hotels	___	___	___
8. Renting a home	___	___	___
9. Police Protection	___	___	___
10. Fire protection	___	___	___
11. Sewer system	___	___	___
12. Garbage pick up	___	___	___
13. Bus service out of town	___	___	___
14. Postal Service	___	___	___
15. Telephone service	___	___	___
16. Television reception	___	___	___
17. Newspaper coverage of local news	___	___	___

	Poor	Fair	Excellent
18. Streets and roads maintenance	—	—	—
19. Informal visitings, parties and get-togethers	—	—	—
20. Opportunities to make friends	—	—	—
21. Contact with Federal agencies	—	—	—
22. Water	—	—	—
23. Home gas	—	—	—
24. Electricity	—	—	—

4. Listed below are selected human or social services or programs in Hopkins County. Please indicate information in front of each of these as I read them to you.

Service	Never heard it	It is poor	It is fair	It is Excellent	Our family used it
Red Cross	—	—	—	—	—
Community Chest	—	—	—	—	—
Family Planning Clinic	—	—	—	—	—
Immunization (Region VII)	—	—	—	—	—
Meal A Day	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Citizen Center	—	—	—	—	—
Public Welfare Department	—	—	—	—	—
Opportunity Center (including Association for Retarded Citizens)	—	—	—	—	—
N.E.T.O.	—	—	—	—	—
Salvation Army	—	—	—	—	—
Ministerial Alliance	—	—	—	—	—
Hopkins County Corps	—	—	—	—	—
Council on Alcoholism	—	—	—	—	—
Others:	—	—	—	—	—

5. What are some new programs or services (for example, Mental Health Outreach Clinic) that need to be developed in Hopkins County to meet the growing needs of this area? Be specific in indicating the following:

Program or ServicesHow can they be developed?

6. Suppose one of your friends called you and asked you to refer that person to some counseling or psychological help. Where would you refer that person to and why? Please be specific.

7. Are there any community services or programs in Hopkins County that overlap or conflict with each other:

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please indicate:

Name of such programs or services

How can these be resolved?

8. Are there any programs or services in Hopkins County area that need to be combined or integrated? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please indicate:

How should they be combined?

Name of such program

Indicate where they can be located after being combined.

Section II. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND ATTITUDES

1. Now I wish to ask you the names of community organizations, projects, activities, and programs in which you have participated during the past five years in this county. Also, for the name of each, please indicate the extent of your involvement.

Name of community organization, activity, or program	Level of your involvement		
	High	Medium	Low
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

2. Would you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community or area?

	Agree	Disagree
a. The people of this community are usually quick to respond when problems arise requiring action.	_____	_____
b. This community is like a house divided against itself.	_____	_____
c. This community is well organized for continuing development.	_____	_____

- Agree Disagree
- d. People here don't care enough about this community to do anything about it. _____
- e. Groups and organizations with different interests work together in this community rather than fighting among themselves. _____
3. Part 1: What do you think are the three most serious problems facing your community?
- Part 2: Which of these is the most serious?
Which do you think is the second most serious?
Which of these is the next most serious?

(1) Problem

(2) Order of
Seriousness

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. Please give me a list of names and addresses of the ten most influential leaders in this community:

Rank

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Please indicate any conflict producing (or troublemaking) individuals, groups, organizations, etc. in your community.

6. What changes, if any, would you like to see in this community?

7. How willing are the people of this community to change from old ways of doing things?

☐ very hard to change ☐ fairly hard
☐ not too hard ☐ easy to change

SECTION III MISCELLANEOUS

1. Number of years you have lived in this community:

All my life ☐ years ☐

2. How many persons live in this household? ☐

3. Sex M ☐ F ☐

4. Race: W ☐ NW ☐

5. Your age:

25 or less ☐ 46-50 ☐
 26-30 ☐ 51-55 ☐
 31-35 ☐ 56-60 ☐
 36-40 ☐ 61-65 ☐
 41-45 ☐ 66 or more ☐

6. Marital Status: Married ☐
 Unmarried ☐
 Div/Sep ☐
 Widowed ☐

Schooling: 8th grade or less ☐
 Some High School ☐
 Completed High School ☐
 Some College ☐
 College completed ☐
 Graduate Degree ☐

8. Church Preference: ☐

9. Please state in as precise terms as possible your occupation or occupations:

10. Please check one of the following categories where your annual family income fell last year (1976):

Less than \$4,999	\$20,000 to \$24,999
\$5,000 to \$9,999	\$25,000 to \$29,999
\$10,000 to \$14,999	\$30,000 to \$34,999
\$15,000 to \$19,999	\$35,000 or more

11. Location: _____
12. Interviewer: _____
13. Date and Time: _____
14. A summary of comments by respondents and/or interviewer:
